

Hedgehog balloon keepy-upy. What could possibly go wrong?

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

Harry's Balloons by Collide Design is a quirky twist on Mitchell Corporation's classic 1989 bubble busting platformer, Pang. In their little-known shareware offering published in 1995, rather than *popping* the balloons from the outset, your objective is to keep them in the air long enough to change their colour in accordance with a predetermined sequence. *Then* burst them collectively.

Why? Well, that's the million-dollar question.



Please allow me to present the 'plot' as detailed in the manual. I think it's safe to say this is unique in that it's the only time I've read a game's instructions and ended up *more* confused than when I started.

"Night fell ... and just like any other night, Harry Hedgehog walked amongst the forest animals with his head held high. 'Harry...' bellowed Owl, and all at once the animals crowded around him. 'Enough is enough, we will no longer tolerate your unfounded big-headed behaviour, telling us how your alertness and reflexes make you better than us. We will, however, give you the chance to prove yourself'.

What they had come up with was Harry's Balloons, and so Harry was sent away to London. Can you complete

Harry's challenge and make the lives of the forest animals unbearable once again?"



Huh? Was that a long-winded, passive-aggressive dig at Sonic? What's London got to do with anything? If Harry is getting on their wick, why not just hide his running shoes and hair gel? That ought to knock him down a peg or two. Don't give him an opportunity to keep on winding everyone up unless you want to end up back at square one!

Whatever's going on, this is only going to get stranger so we won't waste too much time pondering its significance. Let's delve deeper into the manual...

Power gauge - important!!

Power is a control aspect of this game that must be practised and used. By trial and error you can finely

adjust the distance each balloon travels (by choosing the height at which the balloon reaches before descending). To select your desired height, hold down your fire button and watch the power indicator. It shows the strength of your power and by releasing the fire button it freezes and is now ready for use.

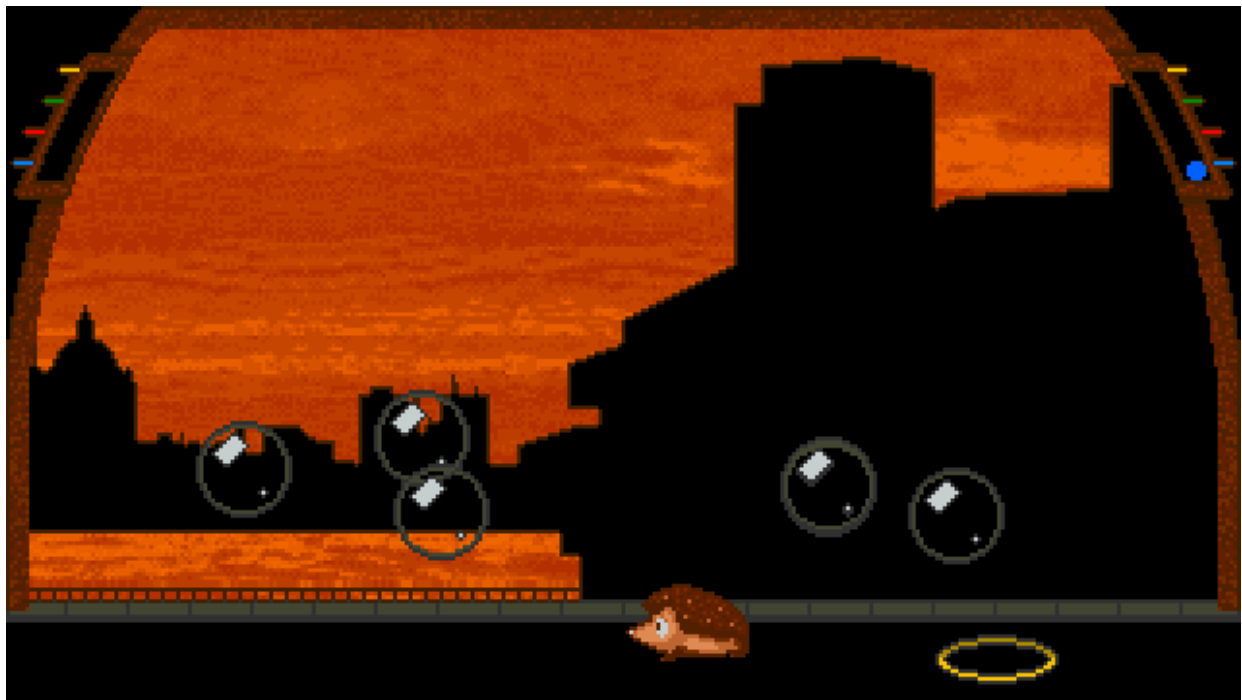
Note - The strength will reset itself each time you press your fire button.

Colour indicator

The colour indicator is at the top right of the screen. It tells you what colours you need.

Magic disks

When standing inside a magic disk you will be able to change the colour of any balloon you touch.



Colour worms

Bite the colour worm that you need by pulling down on the joystick and you will be able to change the colour of any balloon you touch.

Boxes

To change the colour of a balloon, let a balloon touch the correct coloured box.



Big Clear balloon

When you have changed all the balloons into their correct colours, a clear balloon will float down the screen. Trap the balloon inside and then bust it to complete the round.

Kookosity.blogspot.com

It goes on for a zillion more pages, but you get the gist. I've added my own punctuation here and there because Collide

couldn't be bothered. It made even *less* sense before, if you can believe that.

So now it should be crystal clear why changing the colour of bubbles has the propensity to earn Harry the right to be an irritating git, and make the lives of his fellow forestlings a misery.

...you're still looking puzzled?

Up until June 2017 Collide Design were still releasing games for Windows, developed from their base in Rotherhithe, London. That deserves a round of applause at least!

Sadly their home page is now as dead as a dodo, yet Cnet continues to host their wares, including a Windows edition of Harry's Balloons published in 2002.

Well, anyway, plot aside, is it any fun to play? Not much, unfortunately. There are too many rules to follow and too many ways to screw it up, making the whole thing a chore. Pang is brilliant partially because the concept takes two seconds to grasp and you can enjoy it right off the bat without studying the manual. You pick it up intuitively as you go along, and the learning curve is spot on.



Like Pang, Harry's Balloons has plenty of variety to offer (see the manual for details of its tournament options), except I'd wager it's unlikely you'll be sufficiently engaged to discover what they entail.

For the same £9 you could have invested in a budget copy of Ocean's Pang instead. Well, a pound less and three years earlier to be precise. Anyone seeking wild hog action would be better off foraging under another hedge entirely.

